

REMARKS

Claims 2-17 are pending in this application. By this Amendment, claims 2-17 are amended, and claim 1 is canceled without prejudice to or disclaimer of the subject matter recited therein. Allowable claims 2 and 15 are rewritten in independent form to include the features of claim 1 (now canceled), and to correct informalities. Claims 8-10, 13, 16 and 17 are amended to make each of these claims dependent from allowable claim 2, and to correct informalities. Claims 3-7, 11, 12 and 14 also are amended to correct informalities. No new matter is added.

Applicant thanks the Examiner for the indication that claims 2-8, 10-15 and 17 would be allowable if rewritten in independent form including all of the features of the base claims and any intervening claims. Claims 2 and 15 are rewritten in independent form to include the features of claim 1 (now canceled). Thus, claims 2 and 15 are allowable. Applicant respectfully submits that claims 3-14, 16 and 17 should be allowed based on the dependence of each of these claims from allowable claim 2, as well as on the features recited in the claims.

The Office Action rejects claims 1, 9 and 16 under 35 U.S.C. §102(b) over Schuelke et al. (JP-A-2000-127733). The rejection is rendered moot by the cancellation of claim 1 and by the amendments of claims 9 and 16.

In view of the foregoing, it is respectfully submitted that this application is in condition for allowance. Favorable reconsideration and prompt allowance of the claims are earnestly solicited.

Should the Examiner believe that anything further would be desirable in order to place this application in even better condition for allowance, the Examiner is invited to contact the undersigned at the telephone number set forth below.

Respectfully submitted,



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JAO:RMJ/hms

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